

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing apparatus comprising:

transmitting means for transmitting inquiry information to an information center over a communication line, said inquiry information being generated based on digital data that have been recorded on a storage medium loaded by a customer after undergoing a predetermined low bit rate coding process;

receiving means for receiving a result of an inquiry conducted by said information center based on said inquiry information;

discriminating means for judging, based on said result of said inquiry, whether said digital data recorded on said storage medium are legitimately purchased data; and

controlling means which, when said discriminating means judges said digital data to be legitimately purchased data, executes a process to offer an additional service to said customer.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means by one of copying and moving said digital

data from said storage medium to another storage medium.

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said digital data recorded on said storage medium after undergoing said predetermined low bit rate coding process with an algorithm of a predetermined version into digital data having undergone a low bit rate coding process with an algorithm of a more advanced version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means restoring said digital data having undergone said predetermined low bit rate coding process onto said storage medium.

Claim 5. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said digital data recorded on said storage medium after undergoing said predetermined low bit rate coding process of a predetermined bit rate into digital data having undergone a low bit rate coding process of

a different bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produces said digital data purchased legitimately by said customer from said information center.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising inputting means for inputting identification information for identifying said digital data that have undergone said predetermined low bit rate coding process and that are subject to said inquiry,

wherein said identification information input through said inputting means is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

Claim 8. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said information center comprises:

receiving means for receiving said inquiry information and said identification information for identifying said digital data that have undergone said predetermined low bit

rate coding process and that are subject to said inquiry transmitted from said digital signal processing apparatus;

retrieving means for retrieving said digital data subject to said inquiry from said inquiry from said information center based on said identification information for identifying said digital data;

reference inquiry information generating means for generating reference inquiry information based on said digital data retrieved by said retrieving means;

comparing means for comparing said reference inquiry information generated by said reference inquiry information received by said receiving means;

inquiry result generating means for generating an inquiry result based on a result of the comparison by said comparing means; and

means for transmitting said inquiry result generated by said inquiry result generating means.

Claim 9. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said reference inquiry information generating means subjects part of said digital data retrieved by said retrieving means to low bit rate coding process executed by a software encoder, the coded data part being compared with said inquiry information by said comparing means.

Claim 10. (Previously Presented) The digital signal

processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising charging means for processing charges;

wherein, when said discriminating means judges that said digital data recorded on said storage medium are legitimately purchased data, said charging means charges one of nothing and a reduced amount on said customer for said additional service offered to said customer.

Claim 11. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method comprising the steps of:

transmitting identification information and inquiry information to an information center over a communication line, said identification information identifying digital data that have been recorded on a storage medium loaded by a customer into a terminal device after undergoing a predetermined low bit rate coding process and that are to be transmitted from said terminal device, said inquiry information being generated based on said digital data;

receiving a result of an inquiry conducted by said information;

judging, based on said result of said inquiry, whether said digital data recorded on said storage medium are legitimately purchased data; and

when said digital data are judged to be legitimately purchased data, executing a process of offering an additional service to said customer.

Claim 12. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises one of copying and moving said digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium.

Claim 13. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises converting said digital data recorded on said storage medium after undergoing said predetermined low bit rate coding process with an algorithm of a predetermined version into digital data having undergone a low bit rate coding process with an algorithm of a predetermined version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises restoring said digital data having undergone said predetermined low bit rate coding process onto said storage medium.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises converting said digital data recorded on said storage medium after undergoing said predetermined low bit rate into digital data having undergone a low bit rate coding process of a different bit rate, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produced said digital data purchased legitimately by said customer from said information center.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of inputting said identification information for identifying said digital data that have undergone said predetermined low bit rate coding process and that are subject to said inquiry,

wherein said identification information input in said inputting step is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

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Claims 18-26. (Canceled)